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REMARKS ON MR. HERBERT CROLY'S PAPER ON "STATE POLITICAL REORGANIZATION"

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From my view point there is very little of criticism or comment to offer on Professor Croly's article. I am in sympathy with most of his views. But is it quite fair to criticise voters who have had the power of direct legislation during only four elections because they have not already provided their state with good government, or even with "institutions which permit" good government? The people of Oregon have done some things for themselves within the past nine years of which he seems not to have heard.

For example, Professor Croly cannot imagine, "Why any self-respecting man or useful public servant should want to be an official legislator in a state like Oregon." But if he is willing to be a member of the legislature at all there are the following reasons at least why he would rather be a member of the legislature in a state like Oregon than in any state not like Oregon, New York or Illinois for example:

In the legislature of Oregon he will not be offered a bribe to vote for or against any bill; he will not be offered payment to vote for any candidate for United States senator; he will not be invited to make his headquarters at any "House of Mirth" while he is attending the legislature; he will be very sure that no party boss or corporation lawyer is controlling the vote of his fellow members; he will not be offered any railroad passes or corporation favors.

When he goes home his neighbors will not suspect that he sold them out in the legislature. They may not think he is one of the wise men of the Nation or that he was a successful member. But they will believe that he comes back from the legislature at least as honest and honorable as he went. None of these things can be said of the members of the legislature of New York, Illinois, or any other American state where the people have not the Initiative and Referendum, and in substance the Statement No. 1 plan of selecting United States senators.

All these things have been accomplished in Oregon for members of

the legislature by the use of the Initiative and Referendum. Effort was made to secure every one of these measures from the legislature of Oregon without the Initiative. In every case the law was denied and refused by the legislature.

As to the excellence of Oregon's government, or the Oregon plan, as compared with other governments, I am not inclined to argue. It may be freely admitted, without reservation or qualification, that this is the best on earth, and still be saying very little for the Oregon plan. It is the business of government to promote the physical and mental welfare of all its citizens. Citizens are the chief and most valuable product of government. The success of any government is to be judged by the poorest, least efficient and least useful able bodied citizen it produces, in comparison with what that citizen might have been worth to the state and to himself if he had been given every possible advantage by the state.

A government is entitled to be called good, better, or best, in proportion to its success in obtaining the following results:

That no child shall toil beyond its years and strength;

That no child shall ever be hungry or cold for want of food, clothing or shelter;

That no adult shall fail of his or her highest mental development for want of educational and training facilities, with time to use them, which the state might have provided;

That no citizen shall ever suffer involuntary unemployment for so much as one day (That any man should have to hunt a job is high treason by the government against the man.);

That jobs at good wages shall always be seeking men and women;

That every citizen shall get all he earns, and earn all he gets;

That no public officer shall ever fail to protect the weak from the strong, the ignorant from the cunning, or the innocent from the vicious, so far as it is possible within the law for an officer to afford that protection;

That no public officer shall ever make terms for the protection of vice, whether organized and capitalized or not, in the robbery and destruction of the citizen for the profit of the capitalists and the public officers; it must be so organized that it shall always obtain the highest degree of efficiency in all its departments and at least 100 cents of value in public service for every dollar of money that is collected from the tax payers.

The best that can fairly be said of any government which does not

obtain these results is, that it is not so bad as other governments, or that it is not so bad as it might be.

None of these things have yet been accomplished in Oregon, but it is only nine years that the people have had the lawmaking power. Some other governments are nearer success than Oregon though I do not think that is true of any American state. The foregoing objects of government can be secured in a very great degree by any people who have in their hands the powers of lawmaking now possessed by the people of Oregon. Success depends wholly upon the wisdom, patience and unselfish devotion of the voters to their duty as citizens. A host of the citizens of this state believe the people of Oregon will use the Initiative, the Referendum and the recall so wisely and so well, that so far as these things can be accomplished under the limited powers of an American state government, they will be accomplished within another ten years in Oregon.

But the Initiative seems to be absolutely necessary as a means of submitting revolutionary changes to the people. And it is by these changes that the Oregon leaders of the new democracy expect to bring about a practical and automatic limitation of the use of the Initiative and Referendum. These men expect the people will adopt a system of proportional representation in elections that will secure fair and complete representation in the legislature of all the citizens; that the members of the legislature will be chosen from the aristocracy of integrity and intellect of every class; that the members will be men learned in the science of government; that their terms of office will be long enough for them to acquire practical skill in the art of lawmaking; that the legislature will be so completely representative of all the political opinions of the state, as to insure for every political and economic idea that may be offered, the fullest and fairest possible examination and hearing.

Also, that the governor will be elected by a majority of all the voters instead of a mere plurality, and that he will be a legislative leader as well as governor. Then we shall know what party is governing Oregon. We do not now. No one does, any more than any one knows what political party is governing the United States.

Then Oregon will have one of the short ballots of the world.

When these things are done there will be representative government in Oregon and the Initiative and Referendum will be kept and used only for emergencies. There is no representative government in the United States now. There never has been. A majority of the repre-

representatives in Congress are often elected by less than one half of the voters. It is almost impossible for any third party to elect one representative, much less a United States senator. It always was. Has Labor, organized or otherwise, ever elected under its own party name any representative or senator in Congress? There are many Labor representatives in the British Parliament, but whoever heard of one in the American Congress? Surely no one will claim that the American system is truly representative when Labor has no member of the body.

It may be, as Professor Croly says, that the same results thus far achieved by the Initiative and Referendum might have been obtained as well or better by some other method. But is that important, even if it is true? The fact is that no such results were obtained in any American state by other methods, until the way had been staked out by use of the Initiative. Certainly it is not desirable that the Initiative shall be relied on as the principal and ordinary method of making laws. It will not be. But at present it seems to be the best means available for overthrowing government by plutocracy in the American states and cities and substituting Peoples' Power government. I do not think Senator Bourne or any other of the Oregon leaders ever thought of the Initiative and Referendum as anything but a means to an end, and that end is a government in all its departments, national, state and local by the Peoples' Power.

An Oregonian's language does not always leave a perfectly clear impression that he thinks of the Initiative and Referendum only as a means to an end, because he often thinks of the political evils from which the people of the state have already delivered themselves by the vigorous use of direct legislation. So frequent and vigorous has been the use of these powers that it is not surprising for many Eastern people to think that Oregon is exceeding the speed limit.